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Cathedral of Orvieto, representing the Last Judgment, were studied and even imitated by Michael Angelo. This painter was apparently a favorite of Fuseli, whose compositions frequently remind us of the long limbs and animated, but sometimes exaggerated, action of Signorelli.

[From the North American Review.]

PHILOSOPHY OF THE FINE ARTS.

BY ERNEST VON LASAULX,

The progress of science and civilization consists in this, that every idea disappears in a higher idea. A new thought reveals itself, and the world that seemed so fixed becomes fluid again, and takes another shape as it spins around the axis of this new thought. The discovery of a simple hydrostatic principle rendered superfluous the stupendous masonry of Roman aqueducts. They were built to weather the assaults of ages, but they were all toppled down by the breath of one thinking man. Thus one art overturns another. During the Middle Ages the ascendant art was architecture, including, as subordinate branches, sculpture, which chiseled the portals, and painting, which illuminated the windows. All the intellectual and æsthetic energy of the age converged to this one point. The stuff that now makes the poet then made the architect, the sculptor, or the painter. The inspiration which now produces a book then produced a building. The thinker, unwilling to intrust his thoughts to the fleeting breath of a wandering minstrel, or to a perishable manuscript which few had either the ability or opportunity to read, wrote them on enduring tablets of stone, and lifted them up before the eyes of all men. In this literature of the quarry, Abelard's free-thinking found utterance, as well as Hildebrand's hierarchy. Every change of public opinion and all social and political revolutions are recorded here. Even the scepticisms and heresies that crept into the Church are sculptured on its walls and over its portals, in chisellings as caustic as the epigrams of Rabelais or the drops that flowed from the pen of Erasmus. But when Guttenberg invented movable types, and in company with John Faust established his little printing press at Metz, in the year 1450, the life of architecture went out. It is easier to print a word than to hew a stone, to shape a sentence than to erect a column, to publish a book than to put in motion tons of material for the purpose of translating a thought into a building. Besides, the ubiquity of the printed page more than compensates for the durability of the sculptured stone. The paper leaves that fly abroad and fill the earth are more imperishable than piles of solid masonry. A second irruption of barbarians might blot out forever the famous *stanze* of Raphael, and obliterate the cycles of Sibyls and prophets culminating in "The Last Judgment," in which Michael Angelo has traced the origin, growth, and final dispensation of theocracy; but the thought once impressed on the printed page is not subject to such contingencies; it is "exempt from the wrong of time and capable of perpetual renovation." Thus the craft of the printer, by furnishing the readiest mode of utterance, and, at the same time, the best means of preserving the thing uttered, superseded the primitive didactic vocation of the artist; henceforth his function was to adorn the doctrine which he had hitherto been required to teach.

However beneficial the invention of printing

may have been to the advancement of science and the spread of civilization, it necessarily exerted an influence unfavorable to art, and especially to architecture. Architecture coming in conflict with it made a desperate struggle for life. It went back to Rome and Greece, and engrafted classic on Christian art, producing the period known as the Renaissance, which afterwards degenerated into the Rococo and Periwig of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. But it was in vain. All the past could not save it. It is virtually dead, and we shall never build cathedrals so long as we can print cyclopædias. There has been no great architecture since the sixteenth century. The last of the giant builders was Michael Angelo, who died in 1564, the year in which Shakspeare was born; and even he expressed himself in this form less freely than his predecessors. With the same cubic feet of material, Brunelleschi of the fifteenth century is grander than Michael Angelo of the sixteenth. Compare the dome of Santa Maria dei Fiori in Florence with that of St. Peter's in Rome, and the former displays a deeper intelligence and a finer flow of originality. In the latter, the sublime is to a great degree lost in the merely stupendous. The only great attempt at Gothic architecture in the present century—the New Palace of Westminster—is a most signal failure. In comparison with the old Abbey that stands near it, it is an empty and frivolous gewgaw; and yet the Abbey itself is far inferior to the great cathedrals of the Continent. The profusion of ornament which Sir Charles Barry lavished on the edifice could not hide its real decrepitude. It does not enkindle the faintest spark of creative interest. It is the cold mechanical imitation of what ceased to be an inspiration more than three centuries ago, the hollow mask moulded on the face of a dead civilization. It is "a monument of Gothic art" in a far different sense from that in which the guide-books employ those words.

Next in the ascending series of the fine arts stands sculpture. Originally, as we have seen, it was closely allied to architecture, and for a long time subordinate to it. The statues of India and Egypt are all essentially architectural; with half closed, heavy eyes, and arms pinioned to their sides, they lack life and liberty. Greek statuary, on the other hand, is endowed with a freedom and individuality corresponding to the emancipation of the religious consciousness of the Greek people. This freedom, however, was only a gradual attainment on the part of the Greeks. "Life is short, and art is long," and the perfection of all human productions is not to be reached by the efforts of a few generations, much less within the hour-glass of one man's life, but depends on the accumulated labor and experience of successive ages, each mounting higher than the former by a slow, spiral ascent, which often seems like moving on a dead level. Thus the earliest Greek sculpture is only a slight advance beyond the Indian and the Egyptian, and appears to have been derived from them. It is a different stage of the same type, another expression of a religious symbolism, in which every attitude, limb, and feature has some moral or intellectual significance. Consequently we find in the remotest periods of Hellenic art images which we might expect to see only on the banks of the Nile or the Ganges. Three-eyed Jupiters, four-armed Apollos, a Bacchus in the form of a bull, a Eury-nome like a mermaid, a colossal Diana with ten hieroglyphic tiers of breasts, and a black Ceres

with the head of a horse encircled with serpents. The period which produced these monstrosities was pantheistic; they are the embodiments of the old Orphic theology, in which the gods were regarded as substantial potencies or powers of nature, prescriptive types of ideas and qualities to which we do not always possess the key. Apollo was originally the sun-god, extending his arms on all sides like rays of light. But as light is the emblem of knowledge, he became the god of prophecy and the corypheus of the Muses, and finally was endowed with a distinct personality as the god-man, the ideal of spiritual power and beauty. So it was with the oldest images of all the deities, which were supposed to have fallen from heaven. They were highly symbolical in their purpose, and very stiff and conventional in their mode of representation. In some of the most primitive temples they were mere blocks of wood or stone, with limbs and lineaments rudely indicated by lines drawn on or deeply cut into the surface, after the manner of Egyptian basso-relievos. In others the divinities are not distinguishable from each other in form or feature, but only by their emblems,—the thunderbolt, the trident, the caduceus, or the palm branch. They were not intended to resemble persons, but to represent principles. The lively imagination and symmetrical mind of the Greek soon revolted against these bungling and materialistic methods of expressing attributes. The hundred hands of Briareus and the multitudinous eyes of Argus are cheap and childish contrivances to indicate power and intelligence, compared with the ambrosial curls and knitted brow of the Olympian Jove or the prophetic glance and majestic front of Apollo. Yet so slow was the growth of art even in Greece, that after Dædalus had half freed the statue from its original clay by opening its eyes and separating its legs, eight centuries elapsed before it became a living soul under the hand of Phidias.

Sculpture, as well as architecture, was at first employed exclusively in the service of religion, and even during its palmiest days, in the age of Pericles, it continued to be devoted to this end in all its highest efforts. In Athens there was doubtless much stone cutting and wall painting applied to the daily necessities of life, but statues and pictures, as objects of art, were, as we have said, unknown in private dwellings. Before the time of Socrates there is not a single instance of a portrait bust; and portrait painting was first practised in the school of Apelles, a contemporary of Alexander the Great. Pausanias (I. 46) informs us that a certain Phryne contrived to gain possession of a statuette of Cupid made by her lover Praxiteles; but she dared not incur the danger of keeping it, and consequently atoned for her impiety by consecrating it as a public work of art at Thespie, her native city. In Athens there were no private galleries of art, such as we find in modern European cities. Phidias was forbidden even to put his name on the statue of Minerva; and because it was alleged that in the representation of the battle of the Greeks and Amazons, which adorned the shield of the goddess, he had introduced among other figures the portraits of himself and Pericles, he was accused of impious ambition and thrown into prison, where he died. It was not until the Macedonian age that the plastic arts began to forget their sacred destination, and degenerate into means of gratifying the luxury of individuals. The function of the sculptor was half priestly; he was the commissioned interpreter of the gods. We are

told that, when Phidias had completed the Olympian Jove, the lightning fell from heaven and touched the statue in approbation of the work. It is this cause of sacredness that confers a value on these forms. In the progress of sculpture, from the shape of an Ephesian Dianna to the beautiful proportions of an Apollo Belvedere, we can trace the progress of theological ideas from pantheism to anthropomorphism.

The same is true of Christian sculpture and painting. In the Middle Ages, as in Asia, in Egypt, and in Greece, art began with religious themes. Architecture, as we have seen, led the way, and became the parent of the whole family of arts. It is difficult for us to form a conception of the sacredness which surrounded the vocation of the mediæval artist. He had a higher aim than technical beauty, the glories of color, or feats of anatomical skill. It was a holy office committed to consecrated hands. The academies of art in those days were religious fraternities and societies for spiritual edification. Such were the schools of Siena and Florence during the fourteenth century. The code which prescribed the qualifications for membership laid more stress on personal piety than on technical skill. A Spanish sculptor who broke in pieces a statue of Christ because the purchaser refused to pay the stipulated price, was convicted of sacrilege by the Inquisition. As an artist he was ordained to a holy task. The marble became in his hands what the wafer is in the hands of the priest, a sacred thing; and as it was moulded into form, it received a consecration which took it from the possession of the individual and placed it under the protection of the Church.

To this habit of thinking, more than to any influence of climate and social customs, the Greeks owed their supremacy in sculpture, and the mediæval Italians their superiority in painting. On this ladder art ascended to the heaven of its divineness. Its objects were not deified by their beauty, so much as beautified by their divinity. The artist was at the same time a worshipper, to whom the expression of beauty was a service of piety, and from the depths of whose fervent religious emotion sprang forth a throng of shapes flashing with all the lustre that devotion could lavish upon them. The rude, unfashioned stone, before which the Arcadian bowed in reverence, was like a magnet that set in motion all the invisible currents of his religious nature. It was this fine susceptibility to mental impressions derived from material images, aided by an exquisite perception of the significance and æsthetic value of form, that enabled Grecian art to break the tough chrysalis of a conventional type, and emerge free and gloriously transmuted.

In sculpture still more than in architecture the thought predominates over the material, and is more clearly expressed in it. It is therefore a higher art than architecture. The material is the same; but it takes a bodily form, and thus advances from the inorganic to the organic. It is not merely erecting a temple, but it is building a human body, the temple of the soul. The perfection of sculpture rests on the correspondency of soul and body, on the idea of the supremacy of psychological over the physiological, that every soul builds its own body and finds in it an adequate expression of itself; as Spencer says,

"For of the soul the body form doth take,
For soul is form, and doth the body make."

In painting the spiritual predominates still more over the material; in fact, one of the pri-

mary qualities of matter is eliminated, viz.: thickness. A painting has only two dimensions, length and breadth. Sculpture uses the same substance as architecture, but it controls and permeates it more completely; there is no superfluous residue, nothing that is not filled with life. In the glow of the artist's inspiration, the marble becomes as wax in his hands, and is easily moulded to the image of his thought. Painting, in its purer ideality, works in a finer substance. It represents the life of the soul, not in the heavy masses of sculpture, but in the play of light and shadow on a colored surface. The simple fact that painting can represent that "world of eloquent light," the human eye, gives it a vast superiority over the somnambulant forms of sculpture; although it must be confessed that this limitation of sculpture is not without peculiar advantages, for the light which is withdrawn from the eye is diffused through all the members, spiritualizing them; so that the statue seems only to have been

"laid asleep

In body, and become a living soul."

Sculpture is best employed in isolated figures, and seldom ventures beyond the representation of small groups in which the characters are intimately related; such as man and woman both together constituting one complete human being; the youth, the maiden, and the mother; Laocöon and his sons in the folds of the serpent; Sleep and Death, as seen at San Ildefonso in Spain; or the celebrated trinity of Scopas and Praxiteles, personifying the kindred affections, Eros, Himeros, and Pothos. It is only in basso-relievo that it can express the complex interests of historic or dramatic sentiment consistently with grace and dignity: and all the larger groups of free sculpture which antiquity has bequeathed to us, such as the Fiohe, the Elgin and the Ægean marbles, were purely architectonic, i. e. they were employed as reliefs to adorn the metopes and pediments of temples, and were therefore in their nature and use pictorial. Painting, on the contrary, does not stop with the single portrait or the group, but, by means of foreshortening and perspective, blends the far and the near into great compositions, epic, historical, and allegorical. The oldest sculpture is architectural, and the oldest painting is sculptural. Each grew up in apprenticeship to its predecessor before it appeared as a master art. Sculpture, in the different phases of relievö, was first employed as a decoration in connection with temples, and color was originally applied to enliven and heighten the expression of statuary. Thus they are all united in a vital continuity of development; emanations of the same pious enthusiasm, and devoted to the same spiritual service.

[To be continued.]

THE ITALIAN OPERA IN PARIS.

[Concluded.]

The success of Mlle. Patti has not yet, indeed, reached such a degree of tyranny. When she played Zerline recently, the entire audience remained for the final catastrophe, although there was no promise of anything extraordinary. Nevertheless, the tendency to this exclusiveness is too marked, and there is danger of the worst results. Fraschini does not sing with the same care and confidence as at his *début*; the relative injustice of the multitude has disheartened and chilled him. The other singers, excepting the

young Vitali, who doubts nothing, have ceased to do their best, for it has no chance with the public indifference toward them. The best operas are those which the favorite does them the honor to sing, whatever their actual merits, and so talents that might be made to illuminate the genius of the masters are employed to confound them.

A single artist cannot long make good the qualities of a troupe, for the dramatic art does not consist in monologue; and the repertory is too comprehensive to be permanently eclipsed. Let us add, that upon this point; as upon others, the pure interests of art are precisely in accordance with the requirement of theatrical economy. Just in proportion as the receipts on the evenings when the favorite sings are increased, in the same proportion the other nights show a falling off. Could she perform every night there would be a gain certainly, if we could count on the *rage* for her continuing. Could she play half the nights, the balance would still be preserved; but when she performs only one evening in three, the balance is against us. Besides, the theatre is so much more open to chance disasters. A fortnight's illness will produce an almost irreparable difference; and any break in the engagement carries disaster in its train. The name alone of the *Théâtre-Italien*, with its long history of glorious achievements, is a host, upon which dependence can always be made; but such a phenomenon as we are now considering may deprive it of even that prestige.

"What's to be done?" may be asked. There seem to us but two things. We do away with the tyrannical supremacy of a single favorite, and frown upon an administration like the present, which in every way contrives to advance the separate interest in the one before all others, even by doing it in such little particulars as numbering the successive performances of Mlle. Patti, and allowing the others to pass unregistered, as if unworthy the public regard. In the second place, it is the feeblest part of the chain that needs the most guarding against, that is to say, we ought to bestow the most care where it is most needed, upon the off-nights, in purifying our choice of plays for those evenings, in fitting to them the most proper performers, and securing for the post of director and chiefs of orchestra such leaders as we were wont to have formerly. Fraschini is an excellent singer, but, from being able to direct affairs, he has need himself of being animated, incited. We need in such a post the authority of character and reputation,—a Ronconi, for example,—and we may then hope to see some life imparted to our languishing attempts. In fine, it is the bounden duty of such a director to prevent the company and the plays becoming of less interest to the public than the favorite which may be uppermost. It is this watchfulness which has made the *Comédie-Française* what it is. It has actors of the first merit, together with the fit government of them. They are not allowed to become individually too predominant, but rather study to make their importance a reflected one, from their necessity to their company. The result is an organization which is superior to accidents and exigencies, whose ordinary routine is worth more than any spasmodic phenomenon,—a prosperity which is certain and constant, and laughs at dependence on a fashion of the hour. Yes,